

Imaginative lane training hones a scout section's skills in Texas Army National Guard cavalry squadron exercise



Low-flying aeroscout weapons team overwatches scout vehicles moving along training lane.

Scout Training Lanes

by First Lieutenant Robert W. Redding and First Lieutenant Edwin Starr

Under the BOLD SHIFT initiative, Reserve Component units are directed to conduct evaluated training for units no larger than platoon size. To comply with this FORSCOM directive without sacrificing challenging and realistic training, LTC C. Terry Granade, Commander of 1st Squadron, 124th Cavalry, Texas Army National Guard, directed that the squadron's annual training in June 1993 would culminate in a scout section live fire.

The scout sections, consisting of an M113 APC and an M901 ITV, would fire and maneuver, while an aeroscout weapons team, consisting of one OH-58 and two AH-1Fs would overwatch and provide supporting fires, all under the control of the scout section leader. This event would exercise the air/ground coordination critical to successful cavalry operations, and challenge the junior noncommissioned officers to an extent seldom practiced anywhere in the U.S. Army.

On 20 March 1993, the squadron operations officer, MAJ William Meehan, tasked us to plan and execute scout training lanes. These lanes would serve to prepare the scout sections for the live fire exercise, and validate that the sections were in fact ready to conduct such a difficult and complex operation.

In addition to the air/ground coordination and maneuver essential to the live fire phase, we identified several mission-essential tasks to be trained on the lanes. These included a bridge reconnaissance and assembly area operations.

After we determined which tasks would be included in the scout lanes, we looked up the tasks and subtasks

Group, and the scout platoon sergeants, to produce the list of subtasks the sections could be expected to complete. A complete list of the tasks and subtasks were distributed to the ground troops one month prior to annual training from which they could prepare their sections for the scout lanes.

The scout platoon sergeants were selected to serve as the lane experts.

They would each ride with a scout section that was not from their own troop as the section negotiated the lane during the evaluation phase. The scout platoon sergeants were evaluated by officers from the squadron S3 section, and advised by MSG Kennedy, to ensure that they understood exactly what the standards were for successful completion of each task. The squadron commander then certified them as lane experts.

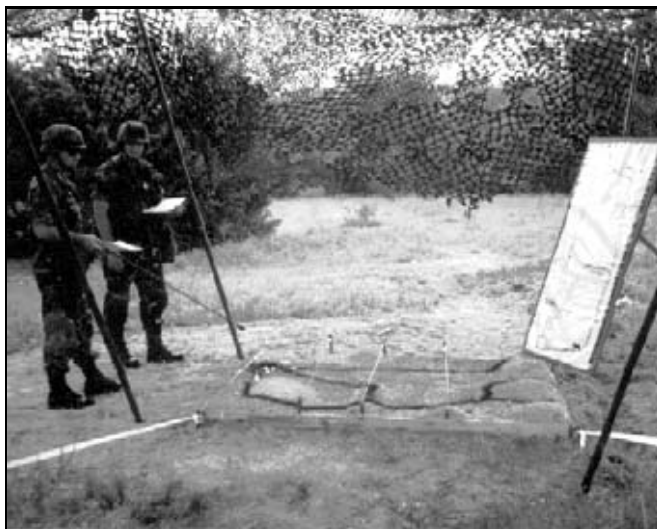


Trooper engages infantry targets on the screen line.

associated with each one in the Scout Platoon Mission Training Plan. Because the elements negotiating these lanes would be sections, not platoons, and because we determined that each section would have only six hours to complete an evaluated run, we had to edit the subtasks each group would be required to accomplish. We consulted with MSG Jeffrey M. Kennedy, our advisor from the Fifth Army Readiness

Six days were allotted for the entire scout section phase of annual training.

The first two days were for the troop commanders to prepare their sections. During this training period, wire and mine obstacles and mock bridges were constructed in the training area so that the sections could rehearse their actions. During the next two days, the sections were evaluated on the lanes. The next day was devoted to rehearsals on the live fire range and maintenance. The final day was the live fire exercise.



Above, section leader receives his order. He back-briefs lane expert in photo at right.

The squadron had all of Fort Hood Training Area 51 to use for the scout lanes. To make the distances traveled more realistic, the sections made a clockwise circuit around the boundaries of the training area. To evaluate eight sections in two days, we decided to run two at a time. One started in TAA Blue, in the northeast corner of the training area, the other started in TAA Green, in the southwest corner.

The section leader received the warning order twelve hours before his SP time. This warning order was included in a packet prepared for each section. The packet also contained the operation order, frag order, and map graphics; the tasks, conditions, and standards they encountered; and the lane expert's comments on their performance. The runs lasted six hours beginning at 0600 and 1200. At 1800, the sections received an order for a dismounted night patrol. Each section performed the same tasks, whether they began in TAA Blue or TAA Green; only the sequence of the tasks was different.

Throughout the scout lanes, sand table briefings and rock drill exercises were emphasized. Upon arriving in the TAAs, the section leaders received an order and instructions on the sand table from the lane expert. The rest of the section performed TAA procedures evaluated by a scout platoon leader. The section leader developed his plan and briefed it to the lane expert. He then briefed his section on the sand table and rehearsed them on the rock drill until all his soldiers understood what to do. This was an evaluated part of the lane evaluation and was graded intensely. AH-1F and OH-58 crews at-

tended the sand table briefing and participated in the rock drills.

As the scout sections negotiated the lanes, the lane experts directed them to repeat those portions of the lane where they needed significant improvement. When a section had completed the lane, we were certain they were ready to proceed to the live-fire phase. The section leader then led his section onto the range, where he would also control an aeroscout weapons team firing in support of his section.

From the lane experts' evaluations, we determined which scout section had performed the best. This section was awarded the privilege of conducting the only live-fire run at night, complete with 4.2 mortar-fired illumination. At the completion of the live fire, each section got to keep their packet as a record of their performance. Each troop commander also received a copy, minus the orders, as a report on how his sections had performed.

As mentioned earlier, the sand table briefings and rock drills were a critical, and evaluated, part of the scout lanes and the live-fire phase. We believe that these were essential to the success of the junior noncommissioned officers being able to maneuver their sections, aeroscouts, and attack helicopters through this complex series of tasks. Furthermore, by using this training model, now the 124 Cav model, we were able to get a better evaluation of our scout sections' abilities and make far more efficient use of our limited training time. The 124 Cavalry model will keep us in good stead for next year's platoon-level ARTEP and live fire exercise.

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